

but when I go home to Long Island, I hear a different story.

My constituents know the state of our economy is nothing to brag about. Prices at the pump are still alarmingly high. Home heating costs are skyrocketing. Corporations have stopped paying into their employees' pension plans. Taxes on student loans have increased. Despite rising health care costs, Medicaid faces deep and painful cuts; and American companies are closing plants and cutting jobs. In fact, almost 3 million manufacturing jobs have been lost since the administration took office.

The American people deserve better than lip service. The American people need an administration in Congress that will put their concerns first. We have seen over the last couple of years certainly the middle income families, which is the great portion of this great country, suffering. It is time that we look at them, help them and do a better job. America can do better.

DON DEGARMO

(Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the outstanding achievements of Don DeGarmo, a senior at Newton High School. Mr. DeGarmo has received the General Spaatz Award. That is the Civil Air Patrol's highest cadet honor. In only 4 years, he has demonstrated excellence in leadership, character, fitness, and aerospace education.

On average only two cadets in 1,000 ever receive this reward; and in over 40 years, only about 1,500 cadets have ever received it. I am confident that Mr. DeGarmo will continue to fulfill the Civil Air Patrol's mission, which is to serve America by performing Homeland Security and humanitarian missions for our communities, States, and Nation.

Upon graduation, Mr. DeGarmo plans to enter the U.S. Air Force and continue his commitment to protecting our values and our freedoms. We owe a great deal of debt to young men such as he who will protect and preserve the United States of America. At his young age, he is already becoming a role model for future generations, and I come here today to commend him for his exceptional career.

CORRUPTION

(Ms. DELAURO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, as the Republican leadership spends more time in the courthouse than the People's House doing the people's business, defending itself from charges of bribery, tax evasion and money laundering, the President is traveling the country

telling the American people how incredible this economy is.

Yet, survey after survey shows the American people do not agree with him. This despite the fact that the economy grew 4.2 percent last year. It is the best statistical performance since 1999. Why? Well, in part because very little of this growth is impacting them. 5.4 million more Americans live in poverty than they did before President Bush came into office. Six million more Americans are without health insurance, and the average income fell for the fifth year in a row last year.

The administration's stock explanation for this is always the same, "September 11. We are at war."

Well, being at war has not stopped corporate profits from soaring more than 50 percent since 2001. And when you have Members of Congress pleading guilty to having accepted bribes from defense contractors, ongoing investigations into lawmakers' agreeing to perform official acts in return for lavish golf trips, expensive dinners and campaign contributions, it is easy to understand why corporations are doing so well.

Mr. Speaker, it is time to put the needs of families before the special interests of lobbyists.

TAX RELIEF FOR AMERICANS TODAY

(Mrs. BLACKBURN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, you know, you can choose to be negative. You can choose to be positive. And with this economy and this great Nation there is a lot to be positive about. Everybody is writing about it. Even the good old Washington Post talking about we are going to move to cut taxes another \$94.5 billion. That is one of the things that makes this economy work. It is why we are seeing record economic growth. Over 4 million jobs created. And today this body is going to take action on H.R. 4297, which already extends tax relief for millions of American families.

There is a provision, sales tax deductibility for States. Sales tax deductibility for individuals who, when they go to file their Federal income tax every April, they can deduct the sales tax they pay every year from that Federal income tax filing. This affects over 60 million individuals, hardworking Americans. We are going to give them tax relief today.

I encourage all Members of this body to support H.R. 4297.

POLITICAL CRONIES IGNORE THE LAW TO INCREASE REPUBLICAN POWER IN WASHINGTON

(Mr. McDERMOTT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, the Bush administration is scaling new heights in political cronyism. Not long ago, America cringed watching on TV as a presidential buddy could only manage to create a disaster, not respond to one in the Gulf Coast. But now we are finding out that political cronies ignored the voting rights of African Americans and Hispanic Americans in Texas.

The Washington Post uncovered a 73-page report that says that the Texas redistricting plan illegally diluted black and Hispanic voting in two of the State's congressional districts. The report received the unanimous support of eight Justice Department career employees, but the Republican political cronies ignored it.

One Justice Department attorney told the Post it was "highly unusual" for political appointees to overrule the unanimous findings such as this. But this is business as usual for the President's political appointees. Just ask the people of Louisiana, Mississippi, and now Texas.

It is time for the Republican cronies to go and let the people's votes count.

A TIME FOR EVERYTHING

(Mr. SODREL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SODREL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to respond to the critics of our Iraqi policy. No one questions their right to criticize our commitment to the Iraqi people or the rate of progress being made. It is not their right I question but rather their responsibility. For every liberty there is a responsibility, and for every freedom a duty.

I just returned from Iraq. Much progress is being made towards a stable Iraq and a democratically-elected government. It is to me irresponsible to enter into the current debate on the very eve of the Iraqi election, the most important election in the history of that country.

Our words should be words of encouragement. Our words should lend support to this important election. Words do have meaning and ideas have consequences. At this critical time, our words should support the Iraqi people, our soldiers and the process.

In Ecclesiastes it is written, "There is a time for everything." The critics are using the wrong words to express the wrong idea at the wrong time.

RIISING HOME HEATING COSTS

(Mr. EMANUEL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, right now it is 25 degrees near Washington, DC. It is 22 degrees in my home in Chicago. It is 3 degrees in Denver and a chilly 19 degrees in Dallas. As the song goes, "Baby, it's cold outside."